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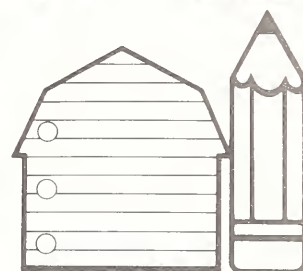
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Ag in the Classroom

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Notes

United States
Department of
Agriculture



Nov./Dec. 1988
Vol. 4, No. 1

A bi-monthly newsletter for the Agriculture in the Classroom program. Sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to help students understand the important role of agriculture in the United States economy. For information, contact: Shirley Traxler, Director, Room 234-W, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. 202/447-5727

National Academy of Sciences Reports:

National Research Council Pushes for "Agricultural Literacy," Vocational Reform

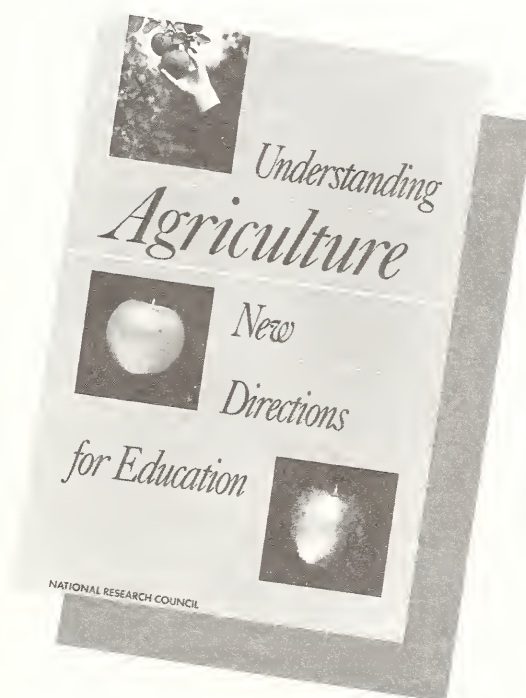
"Like agriculture itself, agriculture education is at a crossroads," writes Dr. Daniel G. Aldrich, chancellor emeritus, University of California, Irvine.

Aldrich recently chaired the National Research Council's Committee on Agriculture Education in Secondary Schools. The committee's new report, *Understanding Agriculture: New Directions for Education*, stresses that the survival of our nation's competitive agricultural industry depends on major improvements in agriculture education.

Aldrich continues in the report's preface, "The committee believes that a renewed commitment to and broadening of agricultural education will ensure the skills and knowledge essential to the future vitality of American agriculture."

The report focuses on two findings. First, agricultural education must become more than vocational agriculture. And second, current vocational agriculture programs should be revised.

The committee examined the need to increase "agricultural literacy." According to the committee,
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Understanding Agriculture: New Directions for Education stresses the importance of "agricultural literacy" among all K-12 students.

Volunteers: Tennessee's Richest Resource

When it comes to ag-ed, "the Volunteer State" certainly lives up to its name!

The Tennessee School Food Service Association (TSFSA), six local agricultural groups and hundreds of volunteers have recently combined forces to supply teachers with the *Tennessee Agriculture in the Classroom Resource Notebook*.

Packed with nutrition information, recipes and classroom activities, the teachers notebook has

already reached every K-12 school system in the state.

Bobby Beets, special programs coordinator, Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation, believes the state's AITC program is currently in a growth stage. "Right now we have a loose network of interested organizations and individuals — but we've made the right contacts. We've been able to reach the

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From the Director

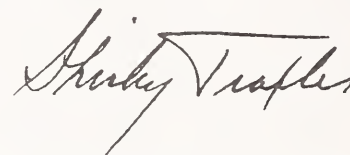
Dear Readers,

As we prepare to bid fond farewell to 1988 and turn expectantly to 1989, I want to say congratulations on a job well done to all who have worked with such dedication and spirit to achieve the goals of Ag in the Classroom.

The results of your efforts are making an enormous impact as you reach out to more and more people who understand the purpose of our program and see the wisdom of lending it their support.

I wish each of you the happiest of holidays and continued success in the new year!

Yours truly,



Shirley Traxler

P.S. Mark your calendars for June 4-6, 1989, for the Ag in the Classroom National Conference in Washington, D.C.

Tennessee

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school administrators," he said.

One of the right contacts, he explained, was the TSFSA. "The TSFSA legitimized our efforts. County food service supervisors approached their local administrators with the resource notebook, and worked with the administrators on a one-on-one basis."

Resources in the notebook include materials from the Tennessee Farm Bureau, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, the Dairy Food and Nutrition Council of the Southeast, the Tennessee Beef Council, the Tennessee Pork Producers Association and the Tennessee Soybean Association.

Beets said that through the notebook, teachers

can find leads to other interesting resources. "For instance, the Tennessee Beef Council agreed to underwrite the cost of K-12 educational materials. Teachers can request software packages, posters, films and guides at no cost."

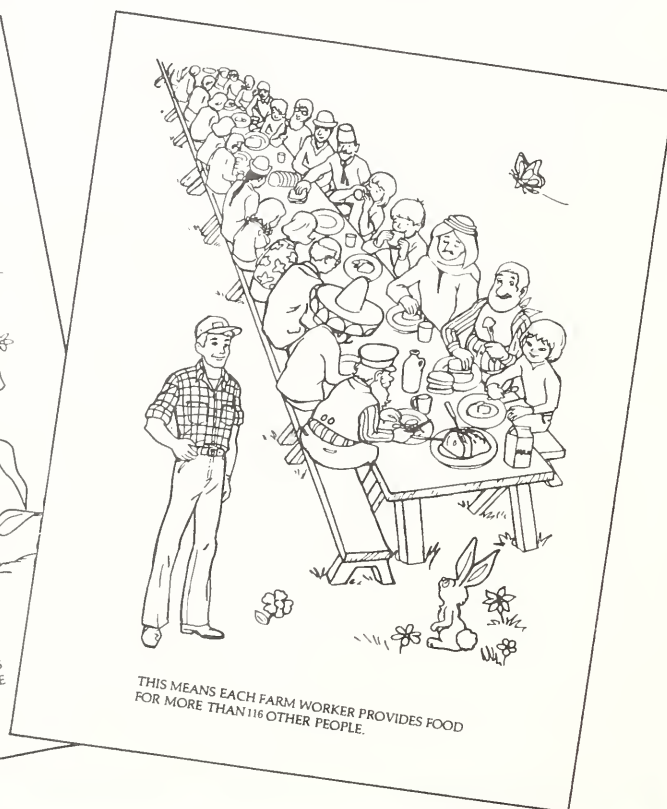
"These materials are usually hand-delivered by county volunteers," Beets added.

Beets feels that a strong volunteer spirit surrounds the Tennessee program. Volunteers make the program work, despite a limited budget. "It would take a staff of ten people to do what the volunteers have accomplished," Beets said.

In the future, the Tennessee Ag in the Classroom program will concentrate on developing more localized materials. "We've been setting up teacher focus groups to learn about what formats and materials teachers need," Beets said.

"Ag in the Classroom is an important program. I could really work on it full-time!"

The "Coloring With Tennessee Farmers" coloring book is one of the many resources available in the new *Tennessee Agriculture in the Classroom Notebook*.



Spotlight

Rhode Island Teacher Discovers AITC'S Versatility

Rhode Island's AITC "Teacher of the Year" Veronica Behrman knows how to make Ag in the Classroom a valuable learning experience for her students.

The Warwick, Rhode Island, elementary school teacher recently incorporated AITC materials into an activities program for her academically gifted 5th and 6th graders.

"We have a resource center and our students spend part of the day here," Behrman explains. "We decided to use AITC units because they fit perfectly with our teaching goals."

Behrman says these goals include developing the students' skills in critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, and communication.

"There's quite a bit of building going on in Rhode Island — our land is rapidly changing. So we used AITC to help our students think about what is happening around them. We took broad topics and narrowed them down to our own land and state. This helped us focus on our development problems."

Behrman used a variety of techniques to incorporate agriculture into her lesson plans. Brainstorming ideas and research were among them. "We also invited guest speakers from 4-H and the Farm Bureau. This gave students the

opportunity to sharpen their interviewing skills," Behrman said.

Al Bettencort, secretary of Rhode Island's AITC Board of Directors, says Behrman's creative application of the ag materials — and her enthusiasm — earned her the "Teacher of the Year" honor.

"Veronica Behrman has helped us get Rhode Island AITC off the ground. She used our materials and really got her students interested in ag topics," according to Bettencort.

"As a teacher, you never know if your students will enjoy certain topics. But I found my students to be extremely interested in agriculture — especially Rhode Island agriculture."

Behrman plans to continue using the ag units. "My students are now aware of their own state, and what is going on here. We were able to use the materials and bring them to a higher level through ongoing discussion.

"As a teacher, you never know if your students will enjoy certain topics. But I found my students to be extremely interested in agriculture — especially Rhode Island agriculture."

Students Find Innovative Uses for Corn

Three Illinois high school students discovered some new uses for corn and claimed top honors in the American Agri-Women's 1988 Science Project Contest.

Mike Daley, a high school senior from Taylorville, won first prize with his entry, a biodegradable plastic product made from cornstarch. Among the product's most significant uses would be fast food packaging for both hot and cold items. "This inexpensive product would prove to be a valuable commodity for society. It will also provide an indispensable market for corn growers," Daley explained.

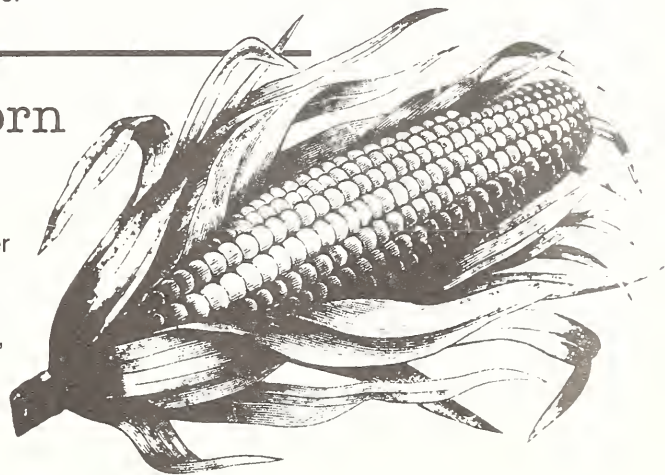
Seventh grader Jenny Talty of Ransom, captured second place with her project, which found corn to be a viable fuel substitute.

Third place winner Dan Hall, an eighth grade student from East Peoria, proved that corn cobs could be used to soak up oil spills that threaten our oceans.

Daley's project was placed on display for the month of September at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. In addition, he received a regional award of \$100. Daley and Talty won \$75 and \$50, respectively.

Entries for the 1989 contest are now being accepted. The projects must fit in an agricultural science category. Also, projects must have been entered in at least one local or regional science fair, 4-H or FFA show. The contest deadline is September 1, 1989. The first place winner will be awarded \$400.

For more information about the contest, contact Jean Ibendahl at (618) 496-3125.



"Agricultural Literacy"

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this term refers to how much the average person knows *about* agriculture. This includes important topics like economics, food production, health and nutrition, and the use and stewardship of natural resources.

The committee recommends that to achieve agricultural literacy, agricultural education must change. "Beginning in kindergarten and continuing through twelfth grade, all students should receive some systematic instruction about agriculture," the report states. "Agriculture is too important a topic to be taught only to the relatively small percentage of students considering careers in agriculture and pursuing vocational agriculture studies."

According to the report, systematic surveys and testimony indicate that agricultural literacy levels are low. For example, an agricultural knowledge test was conducted among 2,000 elementary, junior and senior high students in Kansas, a major agricultural state. Fewer than 30 percent of the students gave correct answers to basic questions.

The committee believes an agriculturally literate person should be familiar with food and fiber production, processing, and domestic and international marketing. The report advises that agricultural education should include enough knowledge about proper nutrition.

The committee also discovered a need for improvement in the nation's vocational agriculture education programs. These programs tend to focus on just production agriculture, but the report says that the discipline needs a broader definition to adapt to recent technological and structural changes in agricultural industries.

"In the committee's view," the report states, "vocational agriculture should give students the skills needed to enter and advance in careers such as farm production; agribusiness management and marketing; agricultural research and engineering; food science, processing, and retailing; banking; education; landscape architecture; urban planning and other fields."

Understanding Agriculture: New Directions for Education cites *Ag in the Classroom* as a model program. "Ag in the Classroom . . . is the most extensive effort under way to make elementary school students more knowledgeable about the food and fiber system."

The report lists a full range of suggestions to improve agricultural literacy and vocational agricultural education. It looks at the teaching of science through agriculture, teacher education and training, community support and agriculture career exploration programs.

Copies of *Understanding Agriculture: New Directions for Education* can be ordered from National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington DC 20418. The price is \$8.95.

Energy Booklet Generates Important Message

"You ought to be concerned about where your food comes from . . . and the important part that energy plays," says Ken McFate, president of the National Food and Energy Council (FEC).

The FEC, a non-profit organization comprised of 250 energy and food-related businesses and groups, is working to help the public understand energy's vital link in the food chain. The council's ultimate goal is to ensure a continued, safe energy supply for future generations.

Food, Energy and You is a booklet published by the FEC for 4th-6th grade students. Through text, charts and illustrations, the booklet explains the role energy plays in agriculture and its correlation to the high-quality foods we eat.

"We were concerned about the apathy of the public regarding the energy supply," explained McFate. "The message is relevant and will be more relevant in the future."

From gas to run the tractor, to electricity in the grocery store, each chapter reveals how dependent we are on our energy supply. Chapter one explains the dilemma we face as petroleum supplies dwindle while the population continues to grow, and the demand for food increases. Another chapter explores alternative energy sources, such as solar power and wind energy.

An accompanying teacher's guide provides



questions about the material and ideas for projects, as well as suggestions for field trips. Classroom visits by representatives from the local electric and natural gas companies are also encouraged to make students aware of their community's energy supply.

To receive your copy of *Food, Energy and You* and a listing of other related materials, call the National Food and Energy Council at (314) 875-7155. Another booklet designed for junior and senior high school students, *Food, Energy and Your Future* is also available from the FEC.

State Fair Proves Virginia Is for Ag Lovers

NOV/DEC. 1988

Over 12,000 Virginia students from 106 schools took a guided tour of their state fair in Richmond this year.

The majority of the students were fourth-graders who participated in a special instructional program developed by the fair's staff and a group of educational advisors. "The program met the standards of learning as required by the Department of Education," explained AITC State Contact Florence Fisackerly.

State Fair Education Coordinator Janet Gerardi said, "The response was wonderful. In fact, close to 2,000 more students wanted to come." Five hundred and forty volunteers conducted the tour, called "Explore Virginia's World."

"Many students were from the cities and suburbs," Gerardi noted. "Some were making the connection for the first time between cows and milk, chickens and eggs, and bees and honey. They also learned about the importance of agricultural products to Virginia's economy, how pioneer farmers and Indians survived, and how new industries like aquaculture (fish farming) are developing."

Students viewed exhibits of the state's major agricultural products, visited "Young McDonald's" animal farm, witnessed the milking process and took in all other educational exhibits.

Two weeks before the fair, participating teachers received a teaching packet, which included information and lesson plans from Virginia Commodity groups. The packet also described the history of fairs from ancient times to the present. "The theory behind the packet was to have the teachers expose students to ag topics before the fair, and then to use the fair as a follow through," Girardi said.

Contributors of the instructional materials included the Virginia Council on Indians, the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, the National Peanut Council, the Virginia State Apple Board, the Virginia Dairyman's Association, and the Depart-



Virginia fourth-graders left their State Fair with big smiles — and a memorable agricultural experience.



Many students on the tour touched cows and other farm animals for the first time.

ment of Dairy Science at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

According to Girardi, the number of students participating in the fair tour could double next year.

"It was quite a feat to pull this thing off. We had more than 2,000 children a day for five days. Every morning you'd see a mile-long train of buses! But we had so many helpful, enthusiastic tour-guide volunteers, everything came off without a hitch. And all of the volunteers want to come back next year!"

Meet Sammy Soil Saver

He may not have his own TV show and comic book like Superman, but give him time. Sammy Soil Saver is the latest hero on the scene, and he can't be stopped by kryptonite.

A silly little puppet with a serious job, Sammy helps kids understand the importance of conserving our natural resources. Teachers use Sammy Soil Saver to introduce students to the proper management of soil and water resources, conservation terms and farming techniques.

"It lends itself to creativity," explains Dana Farver, assistant to the director of communications at the Conservation Districts Foundation.

Farver says teachers use Sammy to call students' attention to local issues. "It's most effective when they can adapt it to issues in their area. A Virginia Beach conservationist who visits local third

grade classes has already worn out some of the Sammys!"

Created originally in 1985 by the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts, Sammy's new home is with the Conservation Districts Foundation, where he is now available on a national scale. The kit has been evaluated by a professional puppeteer and contains hints on using Sammy and helping students to interact with him.

Farver says that one of the advantages of Sammy is that teachers can control the amount of student participation. "They can do it in a controlled situation or they can open it up to the students," explains Farver.

To get your Sammy Soil Saver Kit, send a check for \$49.95 to: Sammy Soil Saver, Conservation Districts Foundation, P.O. Box 776, League City, Texas, 77574-9983. Call (713) 332-3402 for more information.



Sammy Soil Saver adds character to conservation lessons.

The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

Alabama
Ms. Jane Alice Lee
c/o Brenda Summerlin
Alabama Dept. of Agn. &
Industries
P.O. Box 3336
Montgomery, Alabama 36193
(205) 261-5872 (Home: (205) 272-2611)

Alaska
Mr. Ted Berry
Mat-Su College
University of Alaska
P.O. Box 2889
Palmer, Alaska 99545
(907) 745-9752

Arizona
Ms. Sue Whitsitt
4341 E. Broadway
Phoenix, AZ 85040
(602) 255-4456

Arkansas
Dr. Phillip Besonen
Center for Economic Education
GE 310
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701
(501) 575-4270 or 575-2855

California
Mr. Mark Linder
California Farm Bureau
1601 Exposition Boulevard
Sacramento, California 95815
(916) 924-4380

Colorado
Ms. Helen Davis
Colorado Department of
Agriculture
1525 Sherman Street
Denver, Colorado 80203
(303) 866-3561

Connecticut
Ms. Fiti Scoutopoulos
Chairperson
Windham County Conservation
District
P.O. Box 112
Brooklyn, Connecticut 06234
(203) 774-0224

Mr. David Nisely
Department of Agriculture
165 Capitol Ave. Room 234
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
(203) 566-3619 or 3671 or 4845

Delaware
Mr. Sherman Stevenson
Delaware Farm Bureau
233 South Dupont Highway
Camden-Wyoming, Delaware
19934
(302) 697-3183

Florida
Ms. Jodi Chase
FL Department of Agriculture &
Consumer Service
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32301
(904) 488-9780

Georgia
Ms. Louise Hill
Georgia Farm Bureau
2960 Riverside Drive
P.O. Box 7068
Macon, Georgia 31298
(912) 474-8411

Hawaii
Mr. Ken Kajihara
Vo-Tech Educational Specialist
Department of Education
941 Hind Iuka Drive, Room B24
Honolulu, Hawaii 96821
(808) 373-3477

Idaho
Mr. Rick Phillips
Idaho Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 790
Boise, Idaho 83701
(208) 334-3240

Illinois
Ms. Sally Brooks
Illinois Farm Bureau
1701 Towanda Avenue
P.O. Box 2901
Bloomington, Illinois 61702-2901
(309) 557-3159

Indiana
Ms. Judy Carley
Indiana Farm Bureau
130 East Washington
P.O. Box 1290
Indianapolis, Indiana 46202
(317) 263-7830

Iowa
Ms. Sandy Teig
Iowa Department of Agriculture
Wallace Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
(515) 281-5952

Kansas
Ms. Becky Koch
208 Bluemont Hall
Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas 68506
(913) 532-7946

Ms. Mardelle Pringle
Route 1
Yates Center, Kansas 66783
(316) 625-2987

Kentucky
Ms. Patty Blankenship
Kentucky Farm Bureau
120 South Hubbard Lane
Louisville, Kentucky 40207
(502) 897-9481

Louisiana
Ms. Barbara Ruth
Louisiana Farm Bureau
Federation
P.O. Box 95004
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
70895-9004
(504) 922-6200

Maine
Mr. Chaitanya York
Maine Department of Agriculture
Food and Rural Resources
State House, Station 28
Augusta, Maine 04333
(207) 289-3511

Maryland
Maryland Farm Bureau
8930 Liberty Road
Randallstown, Maryland 21133
(301) 922-3426

Massachusetts
Mr. Wayne Hipsley
211 Stockbridge Hall
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts 01003
(413) 545-2646 or 545-4645
Dr. William Thuenmel
MA Ag in the Classroom
420 Hills House North
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts 01003
(413) 545-2731

Michigan
Dr. Eddie Moore
Michigan State University
Room 410
Agriculture Hall
East Lansing, Michigan 48824
(517) 355-6580

Minnesota
Mr. Alan Withers
Minnesota Department of
Agriculture
90 W. Plato Boulevard
St. Paul, Minnesota 55107
(612) 296-6688

Mississippi
Ms. Helen Jenkins
Mississippi Farm Bureau
P.O. Box 1972
Jackson, Mississippi 39205
(Street: 6310 I-55 N, Jackson,
MS 39211)
(601) 957-3200

Missouri
Ms. Diane Olson
Missouri Farm Bureau
P.O. Box 658
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102
(314) 893-1400

Montana
Ms. Betty Jo Malone
RR 2, Box 204
Choteau, Montana 59422
(406) 466-2597

Nebraska
Ms. Ellen M. Hellenich
University of Nebraska
302 Ag Hall
Lincoln, Nebraska 68583-0709
(402) 471-2360

Nevada
Mr. Ben Damonte
12945 Old Virginia Road
Reno, Nevada 89511
(702) 853-5696

New Hampshire
Ms. Susan Robertson
New Hampshire Farm Bureau
Federation
RD 10, Box 344-D
Concord, New Hampshire 03301
(603) 224-1934

New Jersey
Ms. Cindy K. Efron
Coordinator of Agricultural
Development
State of New Jersey
Department of Agriculture
CN 330
Trenton, New Jersey 08625
(609) 292-6889 or 633-7463

New Mexico
Mr. E. G. Blanton
New Mexico Farm & Livestock
Bureau
421 N. Water
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88001
(505) 526-5521

New York
Ms. Betty Wolanyk
New York State College of Ag
and Life Sciences
Cornell University
24 Roberts Hall
Ithaca, New York 14853-5901
(607) 255-8122

North Carolina
Ms. Nancy E. Facey
North Carolina Farm Bureau
P.O. Box 27766
Raleigh, North Carolina 27611
(919) 782-1705

North Dakota
Ms. Kaye Quanbeck
North Dakota Department of
Agriculture
State Capitol
Bismarck, North Dakota 58505
(701) 224-2231

Ohio
Ms. Judy Roush
Director of Ohio AITC
910 Ohio Departments Building
65 South Front Street
Columbus, Ohio 43266
(614) 466-3076

Oklahoma
Ms. JoDahl Thiemer
Oklahoma Department of
Agriculture
2800 North Lincoln Boulevard
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105
(405) 521-3868
Dr. Paul Czarniecki
Program Specialist
4-H Youth Development
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078
(405) 624-5393

Oregon
Mr. Phil Ward
635 Capitol St., NE
Salem, Oregon 97310-0110
(503) 378-3810

Pennsylvania
Ms. Carolyn Holleran
R.D. 9, Box 9175
Reading, Pennsylvania 19605
(215) 779-7111

Mr. Richard Prether
Pennsylvania Farmers
Association
Box 736
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania 17011
(717) 761-2740

Rhode Island
Ms. Carol Stamp
219 Comstock Parkway
Cranston, Rhode Island 02920
(401) 942-7593

South Carolina
Ms. Lynn Hutziger
915 Rutledge Building
S.C. Department of Education
Columbia, South Carolina 29200
(803) 734-8433

South Dakota
Ms. Joyce Watkins
SCS Federal Building
200 4th Street SW
Huron, South Dakota 57350
(605) 353-1783

Tennessee
Mr. Bobby Beets
Tennessee Farm Bureau
Box 313
Columbia, Tennessee 39401
(615) 388-7872

Texas
Ms. Leisa Boley, Project Director
Ag in the Classroom
2914 Aftonshire Way, Apt. 18106
Austin, Texas 78748
(512) 282-1992

Utah
Mr. El Shaffer
Information Specialist
Utah Department of Agriculture
350 North Redwood Road
Salt Lake City, Utah 84116
(801) 533-4104

Vermont
Dr. Gerald Fuller
University of Vermont
Agricultural Engineering Building
Burlington, Vermont 05405-0004
(802) 656-2001
Ms. Megan Camp
Shelburne Farms
Shelburne, Vermont 05482
(802) 985-8686

Virginia
Ms. Florence Fisackerly
Women and Young Farmers
Department
Virginia Farm Bureau Federation
P.O. Box 27552
Richmond, Virginia 23261
(804) 788-1234

Washington
Ms. Julie Sandberg
Washington State Department of
Agr.
406 General Administration
Building
AX-41
Olympia, Washington 98504
(206) 586-1427

West Virginia
Mr. William Aiken
West Virginia Farm Bureau
Route 3, Box 156-A
Buckhannon, West Virginia
26201
(304) 472-2080

Wisconsin
Mr. Tom Lochner
Wisconsin Farm Bureau
P.O. Box 5550
7010 Mineral Point Road
Madison, Wisconsin 53705
(608) 833-8070

Wyoming
Mr. Gene Pexton
Braae Road, Route 6
Douglas, Wyoming 82633
(307) 358-5828

Guam
Dr. R. Muniappan
College of Agri. & Life Sciences
University of Guam
Mangilao, Guam 96923
(617) 734-3113

Virgin Islands
Mr. Enc L. Bough
Assistant Commissioner
Department of Economic
Development and Agriculture
St. Croix, Virgin Islands 00850
(809) 778-0991

Ag in the Classroom Notes
Room 234-W
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250 - 2200

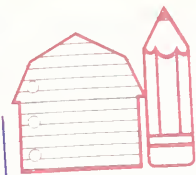
Ag in the Classroom



United States
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20250



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AG IN THE CLASSROOM

MATERIALS

Resource Guide to Educational Materials About Agriculture: A Project of Ag in the Classroom

This guide helps teachers bring more about agriculture into their classrooms. It provides a listing of materials relating to agriculture which are available from private and public sources.

The listings are divided into four sections: Printed Materials; Audio-Visuals and Audio-Visual Kits; Resource Guides or Catalogues; and Miscellaneous items such as posters, wall charts and computer software.

Materials included in this guide are those that are primarily about agriculture and related issues. Materials largely concerned with nutrition, food preparation (recipes), promotional information, or buying advice on food and fiber are not included.

The Great American Farm Kit

This kit is a ready-to-use spirit master/wall chart activity program on farm production and farm costs for grades 4, 5, and 6.

Ag in the Classroom Notes is a bimonthly newsletter about Ag in the Classroom activities around the country.

Library Guide to Books About Agriculture describes books with factual information about agriculture, as well as to fiction with an agricultural theme.

Ag in the Classroom Fact Sheet is a one-page summary of Ag in the Classroom--it's purpose; the basic concepts; how it works; and the role of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Ag in the Classroom Folders are attractive pocket folios which can be used for conferences, teacher training workshops, etc.

Ag in the Classroom Exhibits, in red, white and blue, table top and free-standing, can be borrowed for fairs, conferences and conventions.

Ag in the Classroom Brochures, in red, white and blue, are eye-catching and informative. Distribute them at fairs, teachers' conventions and use them for other outreach activities.

State Updates tells about Ag in the Classroom organizations and activities in each state and lists the State Contact.

Model State Action Plan helps states to organize task forces to implement Ag in the Classroom programs.

Energize the Green Machine tells about yearly employment opportunities in agriculture for college graduates through 1990.

A Glossary of Farm Terms, was originally prepared by Bank of America NT&SA in 1983 and has been revised and reprinted by USDA with permission of Bank of America.

Science Workbook, developed at Ohio State University, includes research projects in food, agriculture and natural resources for high school and middle school science students.

Video Tapes can be borrowed and copied:

1986 Ag in the Classroom video tape shows how Ag in the Classroom works and offers a glimpse of enthusiastic teachers and students involved in Ag in the Classroom around the country. (16 minutes)

21st Century Explorers illustrates to junior high school science students that agriculture is a highly sophisticated industry which evolved through utilization and application of science and technology. Students will also learn about the many career opportunities in agriculture. (20 minutes)

Farmers.....Entrepreneurs was made for National Ag Day by Elanco. It is an upbeat, positive video tape showing how farmers are succeeding through innovative marketing and management. Elanco allows use of the tape for educational purposes. (30 minutes)

3-2-1 Contact, the award-winning television program for children, devoted 5 half-hour segments to agriculture during National Agriculture Week. AITC has been given the right to use and copy these video tapes for educational, not-for-profit, purposes.

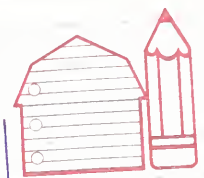
Ag in the Classroom



United States
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Room 234-W
Washington, D.C.
20250



202-447-5727

Ag in the Classroom

Fact Sheet

What is it?

The goal of Ag in the Classroom is to help students acquire enough knowledge to function effectively as agriculturally literate citizens supportive of wise agricultural policies and programs. Ag in the Classroom aims at getting educators to teach more about the source of our food and fiber and the role of agriculture in the total economy and society. Emphasis is placed on incorporating the following basic concepts into a wide variety of subjects that are already being taught in the schools:

1. Agriculture and history. Agriculture issues or events as major influences in human history, from making possible the first settled societies, to current world food issues.
2. The geography of agriculture. What grows where and why.
3. Agriculture science and technology. How science and technology have changed American agriculture in the last 100 years.
4. The economics of agriculture. How the agriculture sector works and the interrelationship of U.S. agriculture with the rest of the economy. Effects of supply and demand, how prices are determined, changing interactions of the factors of production, farming as a business, agribusiness.
5. Agriculture and the world. World food production and distribution and its relationship to American agriculture.
6. Careers. Careers now and in the future.
7. Major policy issues. Land use and conservation, biotechnology impact on agriculture, world food supplies for the future, other issues.

How does it work?

The Ag in the Classroom program is carried out primarily in each state by a group composed of educators, government officials and representatives from farm organizations and agribusiness. Each state is responsible for developing its own program. State groups may operate in different ways in different states depending on the state's need and interest.

USDA's function is to support these state groups. Specifically, the Department's role is to:

1. Help states develop effective Ag in the Classroom programs.
2. Serve as the central point for exchange of materials and information among the state programs.
3. Encourage USDA agencies to assist in local Ag in the Classroom activities.
4. Help the state groups assess their efforts to increase agricultural literacy within each state.
5. Work closely with national organizations to promote the goal of Ag in the Classroom.